



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

## **NMFS Requests Comments on Options for Management of Caribbean Highly Migratory Species Fisheries**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is considering amending the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (Consolidated HMS FMP) to improve permitting and reporting and address other relevant management issues in Caribbean highly migratory species (HMS) fisheries.

There are substantial differences between some segments of the U.S. Caribbean HMS fisheries and the HMS fisheries that occur off of the mainland United States including, but not limited to: limited fishing and dealer permit possession; smaller vessels; shorter trips; limited profit margins; and, high local consumption of catches. These differences can create an awkward fit between the current regulations and the operational realities of Caribbean fisheries.

Further, based on discussions with the Caribbean Fishery Management Council and the territorial governments, NMFS believes that the depletion of shelf marine resources is increasing local interest in HMS resources as an alternative catch. As local fishermen become more dependent on offshore resources, there is an increased need for NMFS to modify the current HMS permitting and reporting regime to include small Caribbean commercial vessels and better collect their catch and effort data.

Therefore, NMFS is starting a public process as a mechanism to improve reporting and compliance in the Caribbean in a manner designed to address the legal and practical issues particular to the region. As part of the process to amend the Consolidated HMS FMP, NMFS is requesting comments on a variety of management options for this action. Specifically, NMFS requests comments on commercial and recreational management options including, but not limited to: creating a small commercial vessel Caribbean HMS permit (valid for sharks, tunas, and swordfish); combining commercial Caribbean vessel and dealer permits (allowing vessels to sell/retail catch); modifying authorized gears (authorizing buoy gear in the Caribbean BAYS tuna fishery and allowing the possession of reef fish traps); and developing methods to improve reporting and data collection. NMFS also requests comment on any other fishery management issue pertaining to Caribbean HMS fisheries which the public believes should be further examined by NMFS.


Comments may be submitted to Russell Dunn, HMS Management Division, National Marine Fisheries Service, 263 13th Avenue South, Saint Petersburg, FL 33701 by 5 pm on October 31, 2008. Please mark the outside of the envelope "Comments on Amendment 4 to the Consolidated HMS FMP." Comments can also be submitted via



email at noi.hms.caribbean@noaa.gov, or via fax at (727) 824-5398. Include in the subject line of the email or fax comment the following identifier: NOI HMS Caribbean.

NMFS will hold scoping meetings to gather public comment on the implementation of new management measures for Caribbean HMS fisheries (time and location details of which will be announced in a subsequent Federal Register notification).

This notice is a courtesy to HMS Fisheries interests to keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact Russell Dunn or Greg Fairclough, at (727) 824-5399.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Alan Risenhoover  
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

**MAY 27 2008**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date